



## A Study on Role of Religious Institutions in Developmental Activities - A Global Perspective

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### ***Abstract***

*In modern days, the religious institutions play an important role. These institutions involve in socio-economic development along with religious activities. Now the role of Non-Governmental institutions along with Government is essential for development activities. The role of religious institutions are important in improving education, health, employment generation, self-employment training, income generation and also in other socio-economic activities. This paper trying to explain the concept, importance of religious institutions in development. Similarly the study highlight the role of selected global Christian religious institutions in development of society.*

***Keywords:*** Religious Institutions, Development, Church, Socio-Economic

### **Introduction**

Religious institutions have been engaged in a wide range of services – as broad in scale as those delivered by secular counterparts. They range from education and health to financial assistance and in-kind support to the poor, as well as humanitarian relief in crisis and less conventional forms of services such as legal aid. According to a report of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) quoted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Faith based organizations like religious organization account for 50 percent of health service provision in Democratic Republic of the Congo, 40 percent in Kenya and Lesotho, and 55 percent in Uganda. In some countries, the role of faith based organization has also been quite significant in education. In sub-Saharan Africa for example, the total number of Islamic Non-Governmental organization providing education rose from 138 (out of a total of 1,854 NGOs) in 1980 to 891 (out of a total of 5,896) in the early 2000s

(Karnataka Gazette 2001). Similarly, some religious institutions providing education in Latin America have expanded their educational outreach beyond national borders and have created networks to sustain their educational programme.

### **Objectives**

The following are the main objectives of the study

1. To know the concept of religious institutions in development.
2. To study the activities of global religious institutions in promoting development of people at Global level.

**Hypotheses:** Higher the activities of the religious institutions larger will be the impact on development.

**Methodology :** The study is based on secondary data. The secondary data has been collected from the published document, books, thesis, journals, periodicals, newspapers, and other various departments, educational



institutions, agencies, development institutions and others concerned authorities. The paper is in descriptive in nature.

### **Concept of Religious Institutions**

A religious institution by definition is an institution that is established not for profit but for religious purposes only. Basically it is an establishment, organization or association instituted to advance or promote religious purposes or beliefs. Place of worship such as churches, mosques, temples and Synagogues, charities, supported by religious societies founded by members of a faith all come under the umbrella of religious institutions.

### **American Churches**

The American founders viewed religious institutions as a central institution within American life, because religion provided the moral foundation of self-restraint and community awareness necessary for the success of republican self-government. These have contributed to the success of America by encouraging virtue, but social science research has also shown that churches provided direct and indirect economic and social benefits to communities. Religious Institutions provide valuable contributions to communities in the areas of direct economic contributions, social service and community volunteering, education and civic skills training, and reduced levels of deviance. Church organizations provide jobs for the community, and Religious Institution support a variety of local businesses. Religious Institution bring individuals from surrounding areas to the community where the church is located, and these individuals provide economic support to local establishments. Thus,

churches aid in bringing additional revenue to communities.

Religious Institution help communities complete vitally important social projects, for which the Government would need to fund if churches did not provide such support. And similarly, 87 percent of the congregations in a Philadelphia survey provided at least one social service to the community. While some argue that this percentage of religious institution is overestimated because it overlooks smaller churches, even conservative estimates claim that larger congregations, representing approximately 75 percent of the religious population in America, provide at least one social service to the community. In a recent, detailed study of churches in Philadelphia, researchers found that churches do much more community aiding work, including helping the poor and making positive social in roads in the community, than previously realized by scholars. The authors declare, "If it were not for the impressive collective effort of some 2,120 local religious congregations, life in Philadelphia would have become extremely harsh. In a similar study in Philadelphia, congregations, on an average, provided 2.33 different social programs. Another study shows that a typical church provides financial support, volunteers, space, and in-kind donations to six community programs each year. In categorizing these community programs, Ammerman finds that congregations, on an average, aid two direct service programs, two educational, health, or cultural programs, and one community development or political/social advocacy program.

One scholar finds that churches contribute volunteers to three organizations on an average, though



some churches provide dozens of volunteers to different projects. A 1990 national study finds that church members volunteer 56 million hours each year to organizations outside their local congregations, aiding with human service projects, educational attainment, cultural awareness and training, and environmental improvement.

**Emergency Response:** The church strives to provide immediate assistance following disaster. The church provides food, and other relief supplies as needed. In 2010 the Church provided relief to people affected by 119 disasters in 58 countries

**Clean Water:** Access to clean water improves health and family hygiene. The World Health Organization estimates that 884 million people do not access to clean water. The Church assists communities to establish wells and other drinking water systems to provide access to clean water. The Church also assist communities establish local water committees and provide hygiene training for families. The community donates labour and materials. Over 7.5 million people now have access to clean water because of Church efforts from 2002 through 2010.

**Wheelchairs:** There are as estimated 20 million people in the world who need a wheelchair but do not have one. The Church wheelchair initiatives strives to improve mobility, health and educational and economic opportunities for people with physical disabilities.

**Immunization:** Ministers of Health and the World Health Organization have immunized over 700 million people for measles. Church financial contributions and help from 59,000 local Church volunteers supported campaigns in 35 countries since 2003. As a result of these

international efforts, there has been a 92 percent reduction in measles deaths in Africa and a 78 percent reduction worldwide. An estimated 4.3 million lives have been saved.

### Hararghe Catholic Secretariat (HCS)

Hararghe Catholic Secretariat where the development wing is now called Ethiopia Catholic Church – Social and Development Coordinating Office of Hararghe (ECC – SDCOH) is another local church based organization, which is operational in eastern part of Ethiopia covering Eastern, Western Hararghe zone of Oromia, Dire Dawa Administrative Council, and Somali national regional state.

### Development Programmes

The ECC-SDCOH organisation engaged various development programmes in the form of irrigational development, health development, and rehabilitation activities etc. Some programmes of this organisation mentioned below.

- Productive safety net program in East hararghe and Dire Dawa administration
- Multiple Water Use Rehabilitation and Development Project (MUWaRD)
- Jellobeliena Integrated Community Development Program
- Integrated Rural Health Service delivery in Midagedu.
- Community based Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OV) prevention and rehabilitation Project.



- "Healthy Choices, Avoiding Risk, Affirming Life" HIV/AIDS prevention program.
- Support to productive Safety net Program (Food Security Program)
- Integrated Food Security for Rehabilitation of Drought Affected Communities in Gorogutu Wereda
- Diocesan education program
- Basic education support for the girl child (BEST) Gender Project

### **Human Health Programme**

Health is one of the important components of ECC-SDCOH intervention with the focus on prevention and support to local health institution to run treatment activities. The major components in health interventions includes health education, growth monitoring and counseling, health post construction and equipping, community health workers training, pilot nutritional education, Home management support, and model sanitation facility construction. The total direct beneficiaries of this health intervention are 130,850.

### **Health Education Promotion**

Health education was basically supported by locally twined various ICE materials developed (ICE materials includes Posters, Flip Charts, and Audio cassettes) in collaboration with local authorities. In this endeavour 13,401 mothers had participated in the health education session as per the priority topics identified for the period. Hence three types of teaching aides were developed.

### **Community Health Workers Training**

38 TBA and 27 CBRHA's were trained to support the community health delivery system through working with the local health institutions. As part of strengthening the service, the CHAs and TTBA's are equipped with medical kit containing different drugs and equipment. The kit will be used as a startup and the cost will be run based on a cost recovery system where the CHWs/CBRHA's will sell with marginal profit and refill their supplies by purchasing from the worked pharmacies.

### **Agricultural Development**

The major activities undertaken in agricultural development included provision of crop seeds, horticultural seeds and seedlings, farm tools, construction of model storage facilities, oxen and training for selected farmers on agricultural development practices and innovations. In the year 2007, ECC-SDCOH had managed to distribute 4,082 quintals of various local seeds as per the seed security assessment conducted in east and west Hararghe zone and Dire Dawa provisional administration. Out of the total seed supply made to the needy beneficiaries 67 percent and 32 percent accounts for Wheat and Haricot bean with the rest types of seeds accounting for the difference. All the seeds were distributed on revolving credit basis whereby the credit repayments will be managed by local community based organizations (CBO's).

### **Income Diversification and Micro-Credit**

The major beneficiaries or target groups for the action are vulnerable female headed households and resource poor households with limited income options. Major activities include provision



of dairy goats, dairy cows, cash credit for different petty trade activities, poultry breeds, Beet keeping promotions, grinding mills and vegetable seeds supply. In the year 2007, a total of 4,422 vulnerable households were provided access to on-farm and non-farm opportunities in various income generating options. Training sessions were also organized for model participant beneficiaries on matters related to saving and credit management (business development and management), Bee keeping practices, vegetable production and marketing. Apart from the formal training, village level animation and awareness raising activities was conducted during the selection of the target beneficiaries. The activities were implemented on revolving credit basis whereby the repayment has been managed by CBO's with close follow-up and technical support given from both ECC-SDCOH and concerned Government partner offices.

### **Irrigation Development**

In the reporting year the construction of nine different capacity small scale irrigation scheme were completed and handed over for the user communities. The construction of the irrigation schemes have brought a total area of 93 hectare under improved irrigation and has benefited 7634 households with a total population of

4,578. Moreover, field assessment has shown that the construction of the nine improved irrigation scheme has enabled an increase of 39 ha of land under irrigation, which is a significant increase in the area under irrigation by using the nine springs and ground water developed for the irrigation.

### **Education**

Although there exist traditional Catholic Church schools in the mandatory areas of the Vicariate of Hararghe, this report, however, covers only the education program managed by ECC-SDCOH in collaboration with the local parishes. These schools are located in east and west Hararghe zone of Oromia region and zone three of Afar region. The schools included in the program are two first cycle primary schools in east Hararghe zone, two first cycles and one first and second cycle schools in west Hararghe zone of Oromia region, two Kindergartens in zone of Afar region.

The major activities in the school project include: management of the ongoing schools activities (teaching and learning process), purchase and distribution of furniture, upgrading support for school personnel and construction / rehabilitation of schools. The following are major activities performed in the year 2007 to maintain and improve the school services.



### Major Educational Activities

Sl.No	Description of Activities	QTY
01	<b>Management of the ongoing schools service</b>	
	Kindergarten schools	2
	First cycle primary school	5
	First and second cycle school	1
02	<b>Purchase and distribution of furniture</b>	
	Sitting benches with desks	150
	Blackboard	08
	Supply of furniture (Chairs, tables, shelves, cabin)	38
03	<b>Personnel upgrading support</b>	
	First cycle school teachers training (TTI)	08
	Kindergarten teachers training	02
	Diploma teacher training (in summer time)	01
04	<b>Construction and Rehabilitation of School</b>	
	Primary school construction	01
	Primary school rehabilitation	02
	Kindergarten construction	01
	Kindergarten rehabilitation	01
	Dry pit latrine construction	02
	Guard house construction	01
	Staff resident house construction	04

Source: ECC-SDCOH – Annual Report of 2007

### Conclusion

Religious Institution are also an attractive component to local communities. Beyond direct economic benefits, religious institution also provide social benefits that have economic value. Several researchers have identified the social benefits that religious institution bring to communities, including: providing help to poor and vulnerable

individuals in the community, improving marriage relationships, decreasing violence among women, increasing moral community obligations, and promoting charitable contributions and volunteering. Church humanitarian efforts relieve suffering for families of all nationalities and religions and offer hope with the potential for a better life for millions of people around the world.



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